

DOT releases new policy providing guidance for automated vehicle regulations

Overview of the NHTSA's Federal Automated Vehicles Policy



Performance guidance for automated vehicles

This section provides a 15-point safety assessment requested of manufacturers covering a multitude of areas including privacy, system safety, consumer education and training, vehicle cybersecurity, ethical considerations and crashworthiness. **The agency specifies that this report is currently voluntary but will eventually be required at least four months before active public road testing begins.**



Model state policy

States are currently responsible for several motor vehicle regulations including licensing drivers, conducting safety inspections, and regulating motor vehicle insurance and liability. The NHTSA gives recommendations for crafting a framework for state policies that encourages innovation. These recommendations include designating a lead agency responsible for autonomous vehicle testing, redefining the definition for “driver” in state legislation, and beginning discussions on determining liability and insurance rules for automated vehicles.



NHTSA's new and current regulatory tools

Many of the NHTSA's current regulatory tools are utilized to ease the rollout of automated vehicles including rulemaking power and the authority to grant exemptions from existing standards. New regulatory tools suggested include a hybrid safety certification process and post-sale authority to regulate software changes.

New policy intended to guide, not regulate

- The Vehicle Performance Guidance section is not yet a set of legally binding rules or regulations
- All vehicles must still comply with the Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard (FMVSS)
- As long as a vehicle is compliant within the existing FMVSS regulatory framework and maintains a conventional vehicle design, there is “no specific legal barrier to a [highly automated vehicle] being offered for sale”

Sources: U.S. Department of Transportation, “Federal Automated Vehicles Policy,” September 20, 2016; Images by T. Cording, Chris Homan, Arthur Shlain and Golden Roof, made available through The Noun Project.